Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Varadarajan to undertake a survey of the Agra-Mathura trapezium and to submit a report regarding the sources of pollution in the trapezium and the necessary measures to control them. The members of this committee are persons of scientific eminence and representatives from Government organisations.

Search of an India Bound Ship by the US Navy

4545. SHRI K. R. MALKANI:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the U.S. Navy intercepted and searched the Ship Gulf Splendour, manned by an all-Indian crew and carrying 2,200 tonnes of dried dates from Abadan, Iran, to India, as reported in 'The Pioneer' dated the 5th February, 1995;

(b) whether the ship held in Umm-al-Quwain in U.A.E.;

(c) whether the USA accuses India of having loaded the stuff in Iraq; and

(d) if so, whether it is an offence under any International law or U.N. resolution to trade food-stuffs with Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) The Ship "Gulf Splendour" intercepted by the US Navy has since been released. The US authorities have stated that the ship, which was owned by a private company, had loaded dates in Iraq. Under the UN Security Council resolution 661, import of all commodities and products originating in Iraq or exported therefrom is prohibited.

Bilateral Relations with Maldives

4546. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether steps have been taken by Government for strengthening bilateral ties with Maldives; and

(b) if so, the details of assistance offered by Government to that island country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The assistance offered by the Government of India to Maldives includes ongoing cooperation in the manning, equipping and functioning of the 200-bed Indira Gandhi Memorial hospital; the construction and equipping of an institute for vocational and technical training and in human resources development, and preservation of monuments. In addition Government of India offers scholarships for training of Maldivian personnel in technical, engineering and vocational courses. Proposal for cooperation in the fields of distance education, and environment are also under discussion.

Visit of Iranian President

4547. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Iranian President visited India in the third week of April, 1995;

(b) if so, the gist of talks the foreign dignitary had with Government;

(c) the leaders, the foreign dignitary met during his visit to the country;

(d) whether the talks held between the Government and foreign dignitary had any positive results; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) The President of Iran, H. E. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, paid a State visit to India from 17-19 April, 1995. During his stay in India. President Rafsanjani called on President, held wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister addressed a special meeting of Parliament, and met the External Affairs Minister. Delegation level talks were also held. The itinerary of visit included functions during which President Rafsanjani met several public figures. During a 6-hour visit to Lucknow on 18 April 1995, the Iranian President also met the Governor and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

The discussions at the governmental level focussed on bilateral relations between India and Iran and extended to an exchange of views on the regional and international situation, especially the possibilities of enhanced cooperation in international and regional forums. The two sides agreed to work together to strengthen peace and stability in the region, and emphasised that terrorism is an impediment in the realisation of this objective.

The discussions covered the range of bilateral economic, technical and cultural cooperation. Particular attention was paid to cooperation in respect of upcoming railway projects as well as in the field of oil and gas. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on the setting up of a joint venture between the national oil companies of the two countries. The two sides also agreed to expand people-to-people contacts and to sustain the high-level exchanges which would further strengthen the positive trends of bilateral relations in the recent period. The two sides agreed to expand bilateral cooperation into new areas. During the visit, Memoranda of Understanding were signed on Cooperation in Tourism, Telecommunications and Postal Services; Environment; and Prevention of Drug Trafficking. A Cultural Exchange Programme was also concluded.

During the period of the Iranian President's visit, the Foreign Ministers of India, Iran and Turkmenistan met in New Delhi and discussed the issues of regional cooperation with focus on trade, transit and transport between the Central Asian region, Iran and India. A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding on International Road and Rail Transport and Transit between the Governments of India, Iran and Turkmenistan was signed. The Foreign Ministers agreed that a full-fledged agreement in this sphere will be negotiated and concluded within the next six months.

पाकिस्तान द्वारा भारत विरोधी प्रचार

4548. प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सरकार को इस बात की जानकारी है कि पाकिस्तान विदेशों में भारत के विरुद्ध विषैला प्रचार कर रहा है ; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो भारत सरकार पाकिस्तान के इस दुष्प्रचार का मुकाबला करने के लिए क्या कदम उठा रही है ?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सलमान खुर्शीद): (क) जी, हां ।

(ख) पाकिस्तान के भारत-विरोधी दुष्प्रचार का विरोध करना एक सतत